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ABSTRACT

Portal schools, designed to bridge the gap between pre- and in-service education, introduce new curriculums into schools by concentrating the resources of and by encouraging shared responsibilities among universities, public school systems, and communities. As a public school that facilitates change, dependent on each school's needs and resources, it functions as a process for (1) training new personnel and providing a field context for assessing teaching competencies; (2) retraining experienced personnel; (3) adapting researched and tested new curriculums and new teaching patterns and techniques; (4) providing feedback for modifying and evaluating the preservice phases of teacher education and inservice programs; (5) involving the community and parents on voluntary and on professional levels; and (6) diffusing personnel and resources throughout the public school network. Portal schools operated by the University of Georgia, by the city of Philadelphia, and by Florida State University are described briefly. (Author/MLF)

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Portal Schools

A Need for Systematic Change

Currently, there is widespread concern for the reassessment and change of the educational establishment. If change is to occur, it must come through altering methods of teacher education. Educators are concerned about how to give the school systems and universities the capability to change, i.e., alterations which may challenge traditional forms of organization, power structure, decision making, staff patterns and training of personnel.

School systems are aware of these problems and have conducted many activities reflecting their concern. To date, however, no overall plan has been developed to close the gap between pre- and in-service education, or to devise a more effective use of teacher education programs which would at the same time provide a climate conducive to ongoing innovation in curriculum and instructional skills.

Change cannot be effected unless the system is adaptive so that new ideas developed by both teacher education institutions and public school systems can be systematically introduced into the schools.

A Need to Introduce New Curricula Into the Schools

Traditional curricula have not provided a quality learning environment for children from low income backgrounds, nor produced acceptable achievement gains. This may not be the fault of the school systems, but rather the result of problems of housing, unemployment, the welfare syndrome, and severe financial crises. Nevertheless, poor children do not achieve to national normative standards.

Experienced teachers are aware of the need for curricular innovation and are interested in improving their teaching techniques; new teachers frequently come into the public schools having learned new methods and skills. Too quickly, however, teachers become resigned to irrelevant or ineffective practices as a result of overcrowding, understaffing, and crisis management, or unreceptive supervision.

Curricular innovations superimposed on a school system are doomed to failure. Planning has not included laying the groundwork for the program nor defining goals the program is designed to meet. When new ideas are developed, teachers are seldom consulted as to the viability of the concept in terms of its relevance to the classroom.

To introduce new curricula into the system and to establish what John Gardner calls a "process of self-renewal," a firm supportive environment must be developed with the active participation of the many levels in the school system, teacher education institutions, and the community.

A Need for Relevant Teacher Education

Massive infusion of funds into the educational system can do little to change it unless teachers become agents of change.

"Teacher education must be rooted in a commitment to educational change. The young teacher needs to be prepared—not by socializing him to the existing pattern of the school—but by preparing him to participate in the re-creation of educational forms and substance . . . He needs to know. therefore, not only about the kinds of alternative educational forms that are developing, but what it takes to bring them into existence in the institution or the school."*

Future teachers are taught what and how to teach by educators who too frequently have not been practicing teachers for many years—years in which the societal fabric has changed radically. Field experience based on this tradition becomes merely an apprenticeship to poor practice.

Teacher education has existed in isolation, especially from low income population schools and their communities for many years. New teachers cannot be expected to meet the growing challenges of these schools without relevant field experience and new means of assessing competence.

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Resentment builds up among parents who feel their children are not learning because the quality of teaching is poor. Teachers resent college of education professors who still train teachers based upon the faculty's perception of what schools were like when they first taught. College educators resent what they consider "rigid" teaching methods and curriculum used by most public school teachers. In-service education rarely offers opportunities for real professional growth.

Foundations, the U. S. Office of Education, universities and school systems have been concentrating their efforts on devising educational alternatives and strategies to bring about change in the educational system in this country. One recent development, the Portal Schools, may make a significant contribution to that end.

A New Strategy

A Portal School is a place where all levels of staff are engaged in training, with the input of the community, and the teachers' bargaining agent.

The Portal School strategy is designed to bridge the gap between pre- and in-service education and to introduce new curricula into schools, by concentrating resources and sharing responsibilities among universities, public school systems, and the community. A Portal School is a public school facilitating change, depending on each school's needs and resources.

Margaret Chambers, Chief of Program Planning & Development for the Teacher Corps, has endorsed the concept of Portal Schools as a means to:

> . . . establish a systematic innovating process which correlates teacher education and introduction of promising curricula and education practices. It is designed to be responsive to changing needs of students and communities and to establish within the total context of the

school community the processes for self-renewal. Although a Portal School is primarily concerned with process, the process must lead to measurable outcomes. A Portal School is a means to produce:

1. More effective learning environments for kids through tested curricula, improved utilization, and continuous evaluation;

2. More effective teacher education programs which provide competencies new and experienced teachers need to create or sustain better learning environments.

A Portal School should function as a process for:

1. Training new personnel and providing a field context for assessing teaching competencies.

Teacher training should be coordinated among the college of education, the public school tem, the community, and the teachers' bargaining agent. This means a stable student-tea population is in that school and will be better prepared first-year teachers for that area. Sch can see prospective new teachers operating in classrooms, and recruitment will therefor based on actual performance in the field. Because the teachers' bargaining agent and the munity are involved in planning and development of curricula and teacher training meth their voice in teacher education can be greatly increased.

2. Re-training experienced personnel

Portal School teachers can select, according to their needs, courses for credit toward a grad degree or in-service credit toward salary increments. Since the same professors who regu teach courses at the university are in the Portal School conducting pre-service teacher educa university courses are offered for teachers in that school, during the school day. Pupils' cla can be taught on a rotating basis by student teachers under university supervision or by pr sors while some teachers are engaged in in-service courses. Teachers are then in a much b position to insist that university courses be more immediately relevant to their needs. The versity in turn is more accountable for relevant teacher education.

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3. Adaptation of researched and tested new curricula, new teaching patterns, and techniques.

This function is designed to try out new ideas and to validate their efficacy with specific sch populations, to determine staff training needed to implement promising ideas into the real wo and to involve both academicians and professional teachers in adapting programs to meet sp cific goals. This provides for continuous reevaluation of students' needs and improvement teaching methods.

4. Providing feedback for modifying and evaluating pre-service phases of teacher education, in-service programs, and the roles of each agency in improving the quality of education.

This function implies that colleges and schools have shared responsibilities and resources a wi become more responsive to each other's needs and capabilities. School personnel w released time can participate in staff and program development with university professors. Tea teaching, non-grading, flexible scheduling, individualized instruction, performance criter differentiated staffing, and joint school-university appointments could then evolve.

In Portal Schools, program evaluation can be more readily achieved since the expertise for eva ation will be part of the team that created the programs. All parties—community, school, uni and university—will share in this evaluation.

5. Involving the community and parents in the Portal School on both voluntary and professional levels.

There is expertise in community leaders not generally recognized by universities, but which essential instruction to future teachers in that community. This expertise would have a significa influence in the preparation of programs which could better prepare teachers in understandi the environmental forces operating on the students they are to teach.

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Parental involvement in school programs is essential; the Portal School would provide an opportunity for community input and accountability of school programs. This also allows for parental reinforcement of educational programs and increased involvement in the system itself. A very real opportunity exists for community members to enter the school system on a career ladder basis for preparation in educational fields.

6. Diffusion of personnel and resources throughout the public school network.

A Portal School must make its resources and personnel available to satellite schools. Staff should rotate to other schools after a period of 3-5 years. Once Portal Schools concentrate resources to provide an environment for change, during which time new training methods, curricula, and staff patterns have been developed, adapted, tested, and become integrated into the organization of the school, then other schools which need an infusion of concentrated educational activity may become Portal Schools.

Common Elements

While each school system will define its own needs and will determine which public school should be established as a Portal School, certain elements are common to all school systems:

1. An advisory council is established at the beginning with representatives from each group (i.e., teachers' bargaining agent, students in pre-service training, administration, community, university). This council acts in an advisory capacity to the building principal who retains chief administrative responsibility.

2. Selection of Portal Schools is made with firm support from the teachers and administra those schools, as well as the top administrations of both the university and school system

3. Planning time is provided for developing projected goals and for designing programs t those goals. This planning should involve teachers, union, community, college faculty, and system staff from the beginning.

4. Agreements must be made among the schools, colleges, state departments of edu community, and teachers for the administration, evaluation and revision of education pro

5. Existing university and school system programs for pre- and in-service training and curr development can be concentrated in Portal Schools. With enough programs per buildi university may be able to justify financing a full-time professor per school to assist in the opment and coordination of Portal School programs. These programs would provide mo fessional staff in a school resulting in more programs for pupils. This staff is availab variety of consultative, testing, workshop, staff and program development, and materi struction purposes at no additional cost to the school.

6. Each group should recognize that this concept relies upon equal sharing of responsib the development of Portal School programs. A written agreement should be drawn up and by all cooperating agencies and should be effective for at least three years—ideally o for planning and development and two years for implementation.

7. Competency-based educational learning experiences should be available in Portal S so that a) future teachers can develop and demonstrate professional skills in the field; professors can return to the field to test and refine their expertise; and c) both profess coordinating teachers can assess students' professional growth and the effectiveness of c and instructional skills in a real-life context.

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It is the interaction of the processes above which defines the uniqueness of a Portal School and which serves as a strategy for self-renewal.

Portal Schools are developed to fulfill the needs of their educational community. Below are five alternative designs for a Portal School strategy.

University of Georgia Portal Schools

The University of Georgia has set up twelve Portal Schools. In each school there is a university faculty member (assistant professor or above) assigned as a center coordinator, who is in the schools whenever students are there. The coordinator collaborates the efforts of members of a team of university staff who work with students and staff of the Portal Schools.

Students are assigned to Portal Schools for a quarter and are given credit through clustering a group of courses into what is called a field experience block. Each student now spends four quarters in Portal Schools: one at the sophomore and junior levèl, and two at the senior level.

Portal School Experience I: Each student enrolls in courses formerly designated as Introduction to Education, Human Growth and Development, and Health Education. For each experience, the team will include university instructors for each area, one serving as the school coordinator. Each student is assigned to a teacher as a teacher's aide during the quarter.

Objectives for Experience I are developed under four categories: 1) teaching as a profession; 2) an understanding of the school in the social order; 3) a study of self; and 4) teaching skill development.

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Portal School Experience II: Students are enrolled in courses formerly designated as Educational Psychology, Teaching Arithmetic, Teaching Physical Education, and General Methods and Materials. The instructional team adds one person for media. The students are encouraged to observe, record, and react to individual pupil behaviors, classroom interaction, and learning climate.

Performance objectives of Experience II focus on developing systematic observational skills of verbal and non-verbal interaction in the classroom, observing and recording behavior of the individual child, developing instructional materials to assist the teacher, and planning instructional programs with the teacher.

Portal School Experience III: Students are enrolled in courses formerly designated as General Elementary Curriculum, Teaching Science, Teaching Social Studies, and Teaching Language Arts. The team adds a media specialist.

Objectives in Experience III cluster around teaching techniques and skills in laboratory situations. Students are given opportunities to develop a variety of classroom strategies which include the areas of classroom management, discipline, as well as the instructional areas.

Portal School Experience IV: Students are enrolled in courses formerly designated as student teaching. Twelve to fifteen students are assigned to a school to practice and eventually demonstrate their competencies prior to moving into a full time teaching position. They work with the total elementary school program, and their activities under the supervision of master teachers are coordinated by a university professor who is assigned to that school.

In-service for Teachers in the Portal Schools: In all schools the university staff is active in working with the Portal School staff. This involves work with individuals, small groups, and the total faculty. Demonstrations, consultations, and classes for credit are the instructional methods.

Philadelphia Portal Schoo

During the academic year 1970-71, there were four Portal Elementary Schools initiated in districts of Philadelphia, located near Temple University. The schools are in the inner city schools are operated under the same budgetary conditions as other schools in the district. physical plants of the buildings remain the same (i.e., no special physical modifications to m projected Portal School needs).

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Staff and Program Implementation During 1970-71: All schools had the strong support of Principal of the Portal School and the respective District Superintendent before initiation of Portal School Concept.

The District Coordinators were charged with four major tasks: a) the establishment of a functio Advisory Board; b) liaison between the Portal School and the District office, the Portal School the University; c) identification of schools within the district that might become future Po Schools; and d) the supervision of ten elementary student teachers assigned to the Portal Sch

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students enrolled in Teaching-Learning Theory tutoring students 3 hours per week; d) all schools had a combination of graduate intern programs (TTT, Teacher Corps, Elementary Internship, Resource Room Training Program, Guidance and Counseling, etc.); e) all schools had an added combination of special programs (Veterans in Public Service, Career Opportunity, Bilingual, Elementary Certification, etc.); f) all schools by mandate of the Philadelphia School District placed a curriculum emphasis on Reading; and g) in-service courses were offered in each Portal School by Temple University tuition-free to those teachers who served as Cooperating Teachers. The courses offered were suggested by the teachers.

The schools established an Advisory Board with the Principal as chairman, with representation from the school, Temple University, the union, and the community; one Board has 2 representatives from the student council.

Boards focused their attention on identification of possible program and personnel resources and developed a strategy for evaluating the "Portal School" as a concept, the effectiveness of Temple's Student Teaching and Methods programs, and the performance of pupils in the school during 1970-71 compared to 1969-70.

Florida State University Portal Schools

The Portal School label was originally attached to one of several design concepts for improving the total process of teacher education conceptualized in the **Florida State University Model for the Preparation of Elementary School Teachers** (1968). Teacher education at FSU is competency-based and field tested with individualized performance rates. Students begin their involvement with classroom teaching early in pre-professional training and progress in much the same way as the Georgia model.

The staffing pattern for a Portal School provides for team approaches to instruction but diffe entiates teacher roles on the basis of level of experience and on the basis of leadership a responsibility. The teams include a position for rotating experienced teachers from other schoo within the district serving on a one year released term basis in order to acquire new skills, upda their teaching competencies, and to gain new perspectives to enhance their teaching up returning to their regular assignments.

A 600 pupil, 27 teacher elementary Portal School would be divided into three sections of 2 pupils each with nine faculty members assigned to each section. Each section would be divid into two teams to provide instruction for the 200 pupils. Each of these teams would have a mast teacher, a rotating teacher, a second year trainee-teacher, and a first year trainee-teacher. team leader/trainer would be assigned to provide leadership and training for both teams in section. At least one teacher aid/clerk is provided to assist each section. In addition to the pri cipal, this Portal School requires both a curriculum specialist with responsibilities for dissem nation of new curricula and a teacher training specialist who provides the overall traini leadership in the school. These two specialists plus the three team leader/trainers would co stitute a teacher training and curriculum dissemination leadership team. This leadership tea bears the primary responsibility within a school district for all in-service teacher training and the dissemination of innovative curricula and instructional practice.

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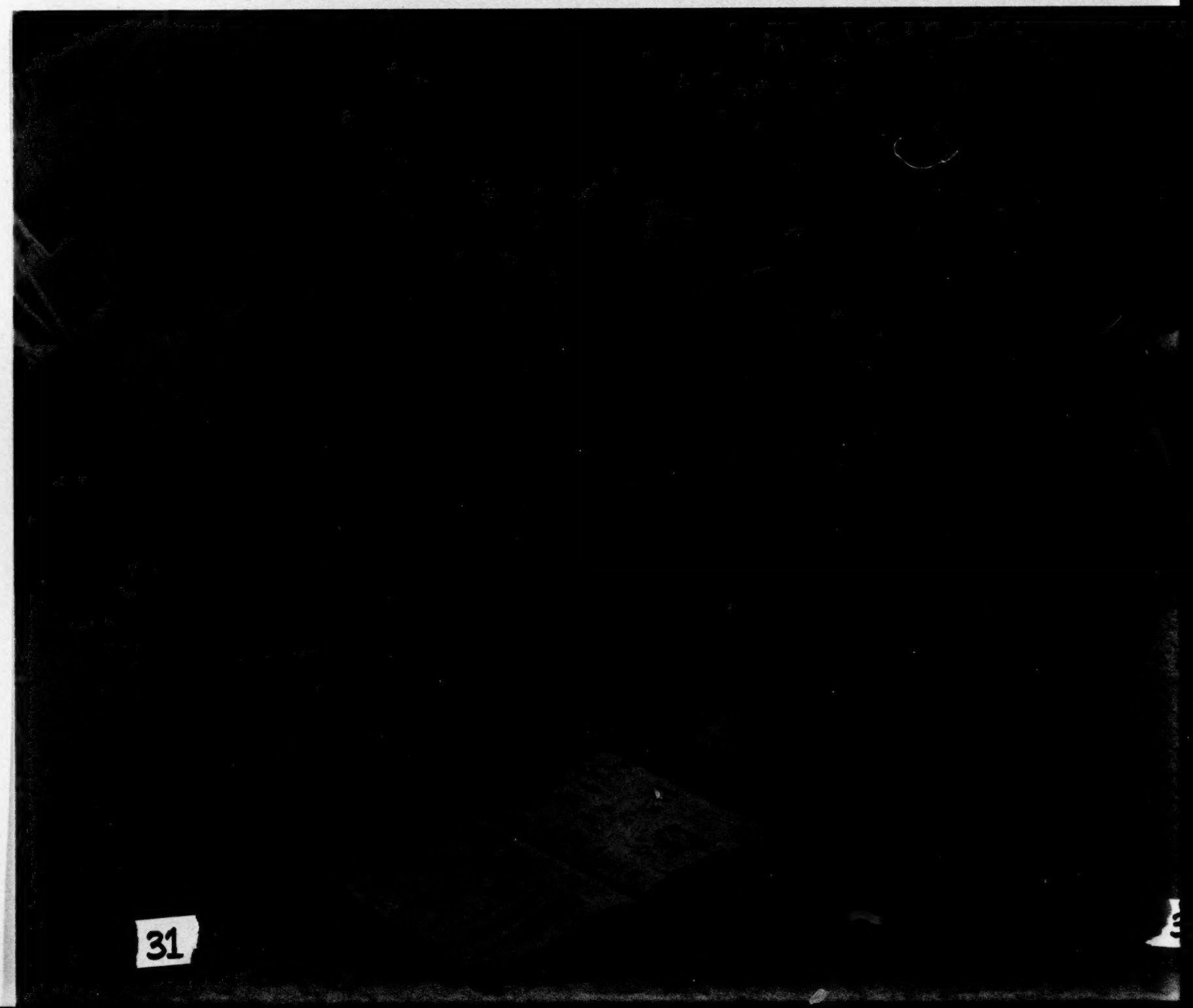

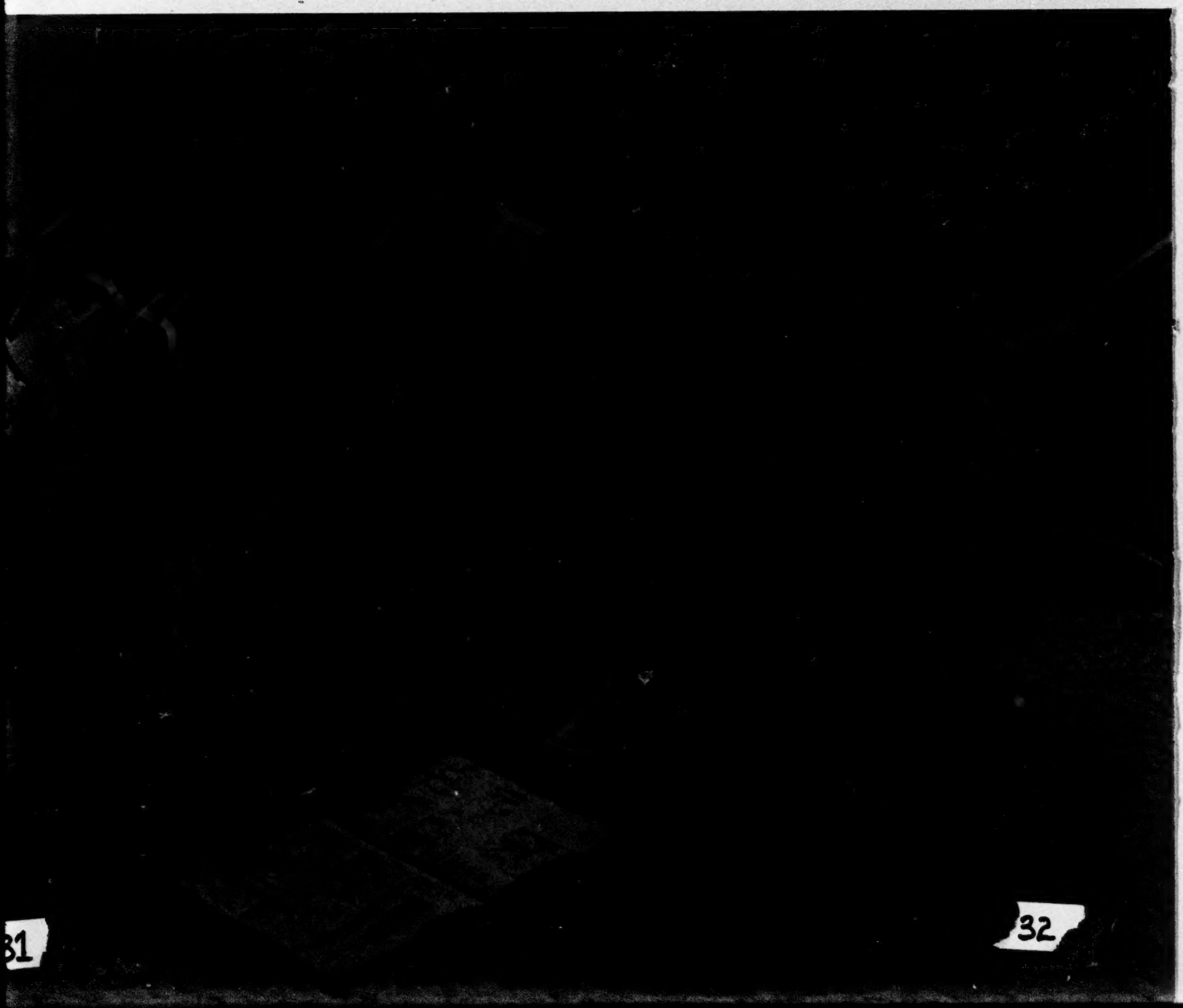

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The More Effective Schools Program of the American Federation of Teachers ad the philosophy that if competent teachers were given the resources to do a com would do it. It increases the support personnel and resources available, at a s creased cost, to each teacher in the participating schools. It concentrates its professional teacher but does not have significant relationships with the comm education institutions as yet.

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While the Florida State University, University of Georgia and Philadelphia models are operating as Portal Schools, the More Effective Schools Program and the Multi-Unit Schools design are administrative structures highly conducive to development of the Portal School concept.

The Multi-Unit Schools, pioneered by the University of Wisconsin Research and Development Center, advocates a redesigning of elementary schools into a team teaching format. Those closest to being responsible for the education of children, the teachers, make the decisions commensurate with their responsibility. Teachers have access to individually presented instructional materials and university assistance. They can deal in differentiated staffing and team cooperation. The distinction between this and the above models is that formal teacher education and university cooperation is a by-product, rather than an essential ingredient, and that prepared materials for individually guided education are readily accessible.

The More Effective Schools Program of the American Federation of Teachers addresses itself to the philosophy that if competent teachers were given the resources to do a competent job, they would do it. It increases the support personnel and resources available, at a substantially increased cost, to each teacher in the participating schools. It concentrates its energies on the professional teacher but does not have significant relationships with the community or teacher education institutions as yet.

Steering Committee

The Portal School Steering Committee will serve on a continuing basis as consultants to districts interested in developing their own strategies:

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